



Thesis: Do we face a third revolution in human history? If so, how will public health respond?

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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: A range of evidence suggests that the dominant culture associated with the economic systems of 'modern' societies has become a major source of pressure on global resources and may precipitate a third revolution in human history, with major implications for health and well-being. **OBJECTIVE:** This paper aims to consider whether there are historical analogies with contemporary circumstances which might help us make connections between past and present predicaments in the human condition; to highlight the underpinnings of such predicaments in the politico-economic and cultural systems found in 'modern' societies; to outline questions prompted by this analysis, and stimulate greater debate around the issues raised. **METHODS:** We draw on evidence and arguments condensed from complex research and theorizing from multiple disciplines. **RESULTS:** Contemporary evidence suggests that global depletion of a key energy resource (oil), increasing environmental degradation and imminent climate change can be linked to human socio-economic and cultural systems which are now out of balance with their environment. Those systems are associated with Western-type societies, where political philosophies of neo-liberalism, together with cultural values of individualism, materialism and consumerism, support an increasingly globalized capitalist economic system. Evidence points to a decline of psychological and social well-being in such societies. **CONCLUSION:** We need to work out how to prevent/ameliorate the harms likely to flow from climate change and rising oil costs. Public health professionals face the challenge of preventing adverse health consequences likely to result from continued adherence to the have-it-all mindset prevailing in contemporary Western societies. Equally, we need to seek out the potential health dividends that could be realized in terms of reduced obesity, improved well-being and greater social equity, while not under-estimating the likelihood of profound resistance, from many sectors of society, to unwanted but inevitable change.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2638900>

Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Unspecified Exposure

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Mood Disorder

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified